

March 13, 2012

To: Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

Testimony in support of Raised Bill #352: AN ACT CREATING A PROCESS FOR
FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE
STATE

My name is Vera Baz and I run a licensed daycare in my home in Meriden. I have been a teacher for more than thirty-five years, counting my years as a teacher in Lebanon, then for a traditional center and now (thirteen years) in my home. Although the children I care for enjoy a nurturing, homelike environment, they also receive early childhood education and social skills. Their parents depend on me to keep their kids safe and get them ready to succeed in school. Home based care is an option many families prefer and I provide this important service for the state and for the community.

Running my own daycare center has its joys and challenges. I have invested a lot into my center but the state's reimbursement rates are very low and I do not have affordable health insurance. Last year I had a heart attack and I now take some very expensive medications. If I am not healthy then I cannot meet my obligations to the kids. We need to be able to negotiate for an affordable plan for daycare providers. Even if we are unable to achieve this before I retire, this should be available for other family daycare providers so we can keep quality daycare homes open to serve more kids in Meriden. If I were to close, six families and their workplaces would be affected.

A majority of family daycare providers in the state are uniting to gain a greater voice in decisions that affect the delivery of care. We believe the freedom to join a union will raise standards and keep experienced providers from leaving. Across the country, home based providers working with SEIU, our union, have been able to increase access to daycare for more families and increase training opportunities. We would like to enjoy the same freedom here, but Connecticut law prevents us from having the right to have union representation. I urge you to support this bill, S.B. 352, and grant us collective bargaining rights. Thank-you for taking the time to read my letter.

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